

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes
March 21, 2006**

Attending:

RMAC:

Ken Zimmerman
Mike Connor
Clancy Dutra
J.R. McCollister
Neil McDougald
Charles Pritchard
Scott Carnegie
Leonard Hale
Mel Thompson
Jeff Stephens

Representing

California Cattlemen's Association
Public Member
California Farm Bureau Federation
Public Member
California Cattlemen's Association
Calif. Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
California Forestry Association
Watershed Council of Southern California
California Wool Growers Association
CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

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| Tacy Currey | Ca. Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts |
| Noelle Cremers | California Farm Bureau Federation |
| Tracy Schohr | California Cattlemen's Association |
| George Gentry | Board of Forestry and Fire Protection |

Items 1, 2, & 3, Call to Order and Introductions:

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order January 4, 2006 at 1:00 P.M. Introductions of all present were made. Review and approval of the January 2006 minutes was deferred to a later date via direct contact with RMAC members by Jeff Stephens.

Item 4, RMAC Recommendations to the Board on the CDF VMP:

Ken Zimmerman asked J.R. McCollister to report on the most recent Resource Protection Committee (RPC) meeting of March 7, 2006.

The following information was reported. CDF is currently experiencing a shortage of staff due to retirement in management level Fire Protection staff. Units are down by 50% in the Assistant Chief position. CDF is active with public education and inspection with the new PRC 4291 law increasing clearance from 30 to 100 feet.

The VMP EIR is now under Board supervision as the lead agency. Board review of the RMAC Recommendation on VMP: The Board decided to review more than policy including CDF performance and the Public Resources Code (PRC). New regulation may be required due to SB 1084. It will take a commitment by RMAC to assist the RPC with their review. J.R. McCollister suggested to the RPC that an ad hoc committee composed of the RPC, RMAC and CDF be formed, in order to move the process forward and clarify RMAC intent.

Ken Zimmerman stated that the RPC does not appear to have made a review of the information that went into writing the Recommendations. J.R. McCollister agreed. Mike Connor emphasized that he experienced very tough questions before the RPC.

Ken Zimmerman stated that to summarize this may be a very long process and RMAC members will be called upon to attend the RPC and represent the recommendations.

Item 9, New Business:

Ken Zimmerman moved to agenda item 9 and asked Leonard Hale to review the recent symposium he attended in Riverside - Living in the Chaparral, sponsored by the Riverside Fire Lab. Some of the highlights of the symposium were:

1. Mr. Hale reported on a computer program that allows landowners to model the response of fire on individual home sites depending on the fuel, topography, weather, etc. He also reported on the REARS (Riverside Emergency Animal Rescue System) program that was developed in response to the 2003 fires where people trying to rescue animals interfered with transportation systems during suppression efforts. It was organized by the Riverside County Sheriff and San Bernardino County is also looking at the program for implementation.
2. BLM has started a program where they will issue a conditional use permit for clearing vegetation within 100 feet of structures that overlaps BLM land. The USFS has not adopted a similar plan.
3. Alex Dunn: This person has done research on the total cost of wildland fire including other associated costs that are not suppression related such as the cost of damage to infrastructure and other costs to public resources. Mr. Dunn has estimated that the total cost for the October 2003 fires when including all associated non suppression cost is 2.5 to 4 billion dollars. Mr. Hale stated that Mr. Dunn may be willing to appear before RMAC and make a presentation on the subject the cost of wildland fire. J.R. McCollister noted that a presentation of this type would be valuable to the

Board's Resource Protection Committee (RPC). Mr. Hale agreed to contact Mr. Dunn and invite him to the July RMAC meeting.

4. New Technology: New technology is available that allows fire suppression agencies to produce real time imagery of wild fires in spite of smoke cover that can be printed on USGS maps. The image is available on the web at fireimage.com.

Board of Forestry Policy Statement: George Gentry commenting:

Ken Zimmerman asked for a briefing on the Board's policy development and strategic work plan, and how it may relate to RMAC activities. George Gentry described the Board's policy development in relation to the information contained within the FRAP Assessment. The current effort in policy development includes a section work plan that provides for accountability in adherence to the policy and the goals that are set by the Board. Mr. Gentry explained that the Oregon Board of Forestry model was consulted for development of the draft California Board policy. In this model each agenda item is tied to the policy statement, and accomplishments are evaluated each year for progress.

Mr. Gentry stated that the Board would like to have a policy statement out by the middle of the year. He explained that the Ken Zimmerman paper on integration of resource management with investments touches upon various aspects of the current effort by him and the Board to develop new policy. These are issues that he has raised with the Board's Policy Committee in previous meetings. Mr. Gentry further asked the RMAC to assist him in crafting the language in Board policy and the work plan that supports policy regarding rangeland issues, as well as other issues where RMAC may provide assistance.

Ken Zimmerman affirmed that RMAC is willing to assist Mr. Gentry with his efforts regarding the formation of new policy and the associated work plans. Mr. Gentry replied stating that as part of the RMAC's effort the range issues expressed in the FRAP assessment need to be brought forward in Board policy.

Mr. Gentry provided additional information on the policy structure. The document is patterned after the Montreal Process format. This enables a systematic review of issues before the Board and actions by the Board.

Ken Zimmerman asked Mr. Gentry what he desires as turnaround time for RMAC's response. He stated that he would like RMAC to review the current draft and have a response back within 2 months. Ken Zimmerman recommended mid April for a response back to him. Mr. Gentry accepted this time frame.

Jeff Stephens inquired as to the status of the letter from the Board to the State Water Board on non point source pollution. Mr. Gentry has not received a response but will check on the status with the Water Board.

Mike Connor relayed to George Gentry RMAC's intent to write a letter to the Board (PFEC) asking for assistance on clarification of the definition of rangelands. This definition is crucial to having a successful certification program for rangeland managers. George Gentry stated that he would take the matter up with Eric Huff, and encouraged RMAC to prepare the letter.

J.R. McCollister inquired as to the turn around time on a complaint against an RPF. Mr. Gentry stated that it varies greatly depending upon the complexity of the case. Most are completed within a 4-5 month period.

George Gentry closed by saying that he hopes to have more information on RMAC's request regarding the definition of rangelands and the timeliness of a response on complaints against CRMs at the next meeting of RMAC.

Item 5, Biomass Potential in California and Implications to California Rangelands:

Deferred to a future meeting of RMAC.

Item 6, Agency and Association Reports:

California Cattlemen's Association, Tracy Schohr reporting:

There is a planned meeting in Washington DC that includes both producer and environmental groups. The objective of this group is to work with legislators to modify the Farm Bill. This includes modification to the Farm Bill that lessens the regulatory burdens on ranchers and farmers that take advantage of Farm Bill benefits and programs, and increases conservation funding. They will also be looking for ways to find incentives for ranchers to do restoration and enhancement work on rangelands.

Tracy Schohr distributed a copy of the California Rangeland Resolution, a product of producer groups like California Cattlemen's and the Resources Agency. Noelle Cremers commented on the Rangeland Resolution stating that she hopes it will be the first step taken towards finding common ground among the various interest groups.

Mel Thompson inquired if there is room for additional organizations that wish to endorse the resolution. Tracy Schohr responded yes, but the main resolution is presently limited in scope to the Central Valley and Central Coast Regions. Signatories to the resolution become part of the California Rangelands Conservation Coalition.

Chuck Pritchard noted that use of the word “working landscape” in the resolution is very encouraging in that it does not focus on single resources or species.

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), Tacy Curry reporting:

Tacy Currey has been working with the State Water Board and EPA (funding source) on the Consolidated Grant Program. The issue is reporting requirements on projects administered by the State Water Board that require reporting best management practices (BMPs) using GPS coordinates. This requirement conflicts with other agency reporting requirements such as NRCS, and is regarded as being overly intrusive on the part of private landowners. Section Township and Range is preferred by CARCD.

Ms. Currey announced a tour scheduled for April that demonstrates active management of the urban interface with working landscapes. The objective of the tour is to demonstrate that management of the urban/agricultural interface areas is needed in order to maintain suitable conditions for wildlife including endangered species. RSVP is April 7th. Various state agencies and staffers from legislators are scheduled to attend.

CARCD has planned a trip to Washington DC in hopes of preventing cuts in funding that potentially could result in the loss of 44 NRCS staff members in California.

California Farm Bureau Federation, Noelle Cremers and Andrea Fox reporting:

Noelle Cremers provided a brief overview of the Heritage Tree Bill reintroduced by Senator Perata. The legislation would include any tree that is >26 inches stump diameter. There is question among some as to whether the bill applies to oak woodlands. The bill requires a statement in any environmental document that states no heritage tree shall be harmed. This statement may only apply to timber harvest plans but clarification is needed regarding rangelands.

Andrea Fox reported on AB 2479; funding for continuation of the Weed Management Areas (WMA) regarding the noxious weed program. She is also working with the State Legislature’s Budget Subcommittee #3 to provide stable funding for the weed program. Ken Zimmerman noted that there is a planned increase for CDFA overhead that when combined with the federal funding source could be as high as 20%. Andrea Fox explained that the reason for the increase in state overhead figures is due to the increase in the number of WMAs since program inception.

Ken Zimmerman asked if there is anything that RMAC can do to further the efforts of funding the weed program. Ms. Fox responded that communication with the bill’s author showing support is important. The bill is scheduled to be heard April 5th.

Item 8, Focus Group Reports:

Rangeland Focus Group, Chuck Pritchard reporting:

Definition of rangelands and the CRM (Certified Range Manager) Program: Mike Connor was asked to report on recent communications with George Gentry regarding the definition of rangelands. He stated that George Gentry is of the opinion that the definition which is written in the CRM Program description (rangelands are grass, shrub or savanna vegetation) was adopted by the Board and that this definition applies. If it does apply then RMAC's problems with the definition may be solved. Mike Connor recommended and RMAC as a body agreed that prior to writing a letter to the PFEC asking for clarification on the definition of rangelands, Mr. Gentry should have an opportunity to do further research. RMAC members agreed.

Chuck Pritchard opened discussion on identifying potential rangeland values as discussed at the previous Focus Group meeting. He recommended moving forward on developing the list so that decision makers may use it as a reference. Ken Zimmerman mentioned the proposed letter to the Secretary of Resources informing him of RMAC's intent to develop a list of rangeland values. RMAC agreed that the letter be reviewed by RMAC and that the Board be consulted prior to sending it. Chuck Pritchard agreed to submit a draft to Jeff Stephens for distribution to RMAC.

Discussion returned to the Certified Range Manager Program and the definition of rangelands. George Gentry confirmed that the Board has adopted the definition for rangelands found within the RMAC Strategic Plan and cited California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 8, Article 1, Section 1561.1 as the supporting regulation. George Gentry also cited Title 14, Chapter 10 Article 4, Section 1651 as the regulation that states how a range manager may become certified with the State.

Motion: Mike Connor made a motion that Neil McDougald draft a letter to SRM that will be reviewed by RMAC and then sent to the PFEC licensing officer for review. Motion seconded and passed unanimously.

Chuck Pritchard relayed RMAC's plan to address rangeland values to George Gentry. Mr. Pritchard informed him of RMAC's intent to compose the rangeland values letter to the Secretary, and ask for Board review prior to sending the letter. George Gentry concurred with the RMAC proposal and further recommended that RMAC consider how the letter may tie into the current effort on Board Policy revision.

Rangeland Policy Focus Group, Ken Zimmerman reporting:

Ken Zimmerman opened discussion on his policy paper dealing with investing in resource management. The paper was presented to and accepted by the Board's Policy Committee. He also at that time recommended to the Board's Policy Committee that FRAP assist with developing the paper. It was also presented to and accepted by the Fire and Watershed Council (Leonard Hale RMAC representative). The Council voted on and approved acceptance of the paper. Ken Zimmerman recommended to the Council that they work with the Board's Policy Committee in the continued development of the paper. Ken Zimmerman asked Jeff Stephens to distribute the UC Santa Cruz paper cited in the Zimmerman paper. Jeff Stephens will make the distribution.

Ken Zimmerman emphasized the lack of maintenance as a component in grant and bond funds and the need to have maintenance in order preserve project accomplishments.

Motion: Mike Connor moved that the paper be accepted by RMAC as written. Motion seconded. Additional discussion: Ken Zimmerman stated he did not include a conclusion. This was done because the problem is complex and will require a broad group of people to arrive at an appropriate set of conclusions. This paper has the potential to create substantial work for RMAC. Additional discussion occurred on the lack of maintenance. Mike Connor noted that many people do not perceive the need for management. Mel Thompson asked why FRAP is the next step up for the project. Ken Zimmerman stated that FRAP has the information and resources to create an acceptable product. Vote was called for; motion passed unanimously.

Water Focus Group, Group discussion:

Tracy Schohr noted that a draft response to the Board letter has been circulated to all Regional Boards; however, she has not read the draft. Noelle Cremers stated that there is an effort underway by the State water Board to form the Advisory Committee. The original plan for RMAC to head this committee has been abandoned by the Water Board. Ms. Cremers further recommended that if a response to the Board of Forestry's letter is not received in the near future then members of the producer groups should attend the next State Water Board meeting and note the lack of response in the Water Board minutes.

Item 8, Board Appointments to RMAC; Status:

Jeff Stephens provided a summary of RMAC appointments and remaining terms for RMAC members. Presently all RMAC members are in good standing with the most recent appointments by the Board. Mel Thompson stated that he informed the Wool Growers of a potential opening on RMAC. The process is started for finding a suitable candidate.

Item 12, New and Unfinished Business:

Mike Connor noted that CDF is absent from the list of supporting agencies for the Rangeland Resolution.

Motion: Mike Connor moved that RMAC place a request to CDF through the Board that CDF become signatory to the Rangeland Resolution. Motion seconded and approved unanimously.

Ken Zimmerman expressed concern that RMAC has received no information since the last meeting regarding development of the State Fire Plan, and made reference to the 1996 California Fire Plan Update presented by J.R. McCollister at the last meeting of RMAC. Jeff Stephens confirmed that this document was in fact distributed to RMAC at the meeting attending by Tom Hoffman and Bill Snyder of the Department.

Jeff Stephens confirmed that he will supply electronic copy of the Board's draft policy and that comments are due back by April 15, 2006.

Leonard Hale confirmed that he will contact Alex Dunn and arrange for him to speak at a future meeting of RMAC or the Board. A date will be sought that allows both Board members and RMAC to attend. RMAC may wish to move their meeting date to July 11 and 12 to coincide with the Board.

Item 13, Public Comment:

None

Meeting Adjourned 4:23 p.m.